

## **Introduction**

This document will provide information regarding the plan to return to brick-and-mortar learning for the 2020-2021 school year. Before we discuss the specific aspects of the plan, let us start with an introduction to several of the key foundational premises that the plan is built upon. The principles listed below will allow us to remain open and only use virtual learning for those who have been identified with COVID-19 or in a situation in which working from home is advised.

**Partnership** – Catholic elementary schools are inherently a partnership between the parent and the school. This is never more important than at this time and an even greater partnership is now needed. It is our goal to open this school year and to remain open. This cannot be possible unless the school and the parents agree to the importance of monitoring your child’s health daily. Most importantly, this means that children who are experiencing symptoms – such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea - be kept at home by parents until medically cleared to return to school. With parental cooperation in this matter, we will be able to keep the schools open and safe.

## **Cohorting**

*A cohort is a group of students in the same grade; in most cases, this is a single homeroom.*

Cohorting is recommended by many health organizations as an environmental measure to prevent the spread of disease. Some large school systems are using it as the only method of prevention to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Although our school will be using other precautionary measures, cohorting will be a major part of the plan. With this we will keep groups of children together for the entire day. They will attend lunch, recess and classes as a cohort. If a case of COVID-19 were to surface within a cohort, we will then move to virtual learning at home with just the identified cohort. The rest of the school would continue to operate with in-class instruction.

**Social distancing** – Social distancing is also a fundamental practice in all our operating procedures. Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. Keeping your distance from others lessens the chances of catching and spreading COVID-19. Travel in the hallway, lunch periods, and classroom instruction have all been planned to maximize social distancing.

**Strategic Use of Masks** – The norms for the wearing of masks in school by both the teacher and the students have changed several times in the past few weeks. The current regulation: PDE is now saying all students over the age of two have to wear a mask at school at all times regardless of their prior guidance. There are a few exceptions - when eating and drinking and when the teacher gives a mask break.

Link:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID19/messages/August2020/Pages/August17.aspx>

**Enhanced Cleaning** – The school will increase the cleaning of common areas and highly used features such as door knobs, handrails, and counters. Rest rooms will be cleaned several times throughout the day. Children are encouraged to bring their own water bottles to school, as common water fountains will not be in use. With this enhanced cleaning, a safer environment can be established.

**Monitoring Health** – Every day, parents are primarily responsible for monitoring the health of their children. Teachers will be reminded to check the health of their students during a common activity. Additionally, the school will implement daily temperature monitoring.

**Virtual Learning** – Use of both distance learning and virtual learning. We will make two types of non-traditional learning available.

- If a child has not been diagnosed with COVID-19 but has been in close proximity to someone who has, the child will be excluded from school for a period of isolation. The child can join the class via a telecommuting practice. The major subjects will be available through this method. Materials will be exchanged through the Learning Management System (LMS). For Grades 1-3 this will be Seesaw; Grades 4-8 will utilize Google Classroom.
- In the case where a cohort has been dismissed from school and COVID-19 has been identified, the entire cohort will utilize distance learning for the isolation period. Lessons will be delivered through a telecommuting platform when possible, with heavy reliance on the LMS.
- Parents who so choose are given the option of full-time online learning for their children (see pages 23, 24).

**Modified Attendance** – Since we are encouraging parents to monitor health closely and we also encourage keeping children home if they display symptoms, the grading of attendance has changed. Children will be marked as attending in person or attending virtually. Only when children cannot or do not participate in any of the virtual lessons, they will they be marked absent.